

GREENWorks

Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

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Greener Transportation Choices

Each year more vehicles take to the highways, with more and more people traveling greater distances. However, if you care about the Earth, you look for ways to help preserve and protect our environment. Take transportation, for example. For every gallon of gasoline you can save, you avoid releasing 20 pounds of carbon dioxide to the air! Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is a major cause of climate change!

Most people know that carbon monoxide (CO) is a poisonous, odorless, invisible gas that affects people's cardiovascular and nervous systems. But did you know that, during 2005, cars and trucks on New Hampshire's roadways contributed almost 60 percent of all human-caused carbon monoxide emissions in New Hampshire?

The same vehicles released almost half of the man-made nitrogen oxides (NO_x) emitted in the state. Those emissions contribute to the formation of acid rain and smog. And, speaking of smog, highway vehicles emit about one-quarter of all man-made VOC emissions (volatile organic compounds) in New Hampshire, another component of smog.

There's no question that reducing the miles our vehicles travel will help improve air quality, not to mention save money and improve our health. When just one person decides to commute to work by bicycle, walking, or carpooling, 78 pounds of carbon monoxide, 6 pounds of nitrogen oxides, and 7 pounds of volatile organic compounds can be avoided per year. (These figures are based on one commuter driving 20 miles per day, 5 days per week for a year, and EPA's National Emissions Inventory.)

To help this effort, eight years ago New Hampshire began promoting "Bike/Walk to Work Day" on a single day in mid-May. It has since expanded into a six-week "Commute Green" promotion which encourages active and inter-modal transportation whenever possible, not just commuting to work. Each year the Bike-Walk Alliance of New Hampshire (BWA-NH), NH Department of Transportation's Bicycle-Pedestrian program, and other cooperating agencies and organizations participate in the Commute Green promotion to encourage less use of single occupancy vehicles and more walking, bicycling, carpooling, and use of public transit for the purpose of reducing pollution and developing healthier lifestyles. Over the last few years, participation in this event has steadily increased.

New in 2010 is a series of "Bicycling Awareness Rides" conducted in all regions of the state over the six-week period from May 15th to June 25th. Multiple loop rides, with family-friendly short routes to more challenging loops for experienced cyclists, highlight rail trails, scenic and historic locations. Also promoted are helmet use (a state law for those under 16), efficient

cycling techniques, compliance with the rules of the road (including the "3 foot rule"), and how cyclists and motorists can safely share the roadways. Information collected each year about trips taken, problems encountered, the enjoyment factor, and similar items helps to make the Commute Green events better each year!

So do your part to help reduce air pollution by making greener, and cleaner, transportation choices! Check the BWA-NH web site (www.bwanh.org) for more information on Commute Green events or contact them at info@bwanh.org or 603 898-9926. For information on carpooling and New Hampshire's transit providers, see www.rideshare.nh.gov or call 800.462.8707.